

CHAPTER XIV1 A CONSTITUTIONAL DESPOTISM

Policy of the First Consul — His Family — The New Officials — The Council of State — Bonaparte's Ubiquity — Foreign Affairs — France and Russia — The Mistake of Prussia — Peace Impossible — Bonaparte's Plans — His Aims — The Temper of Great Britain — Bonaparte's Appeal to the Army — The Military Situation.

THE makers of a paper constitution cannot foresee every detail in the working of its provisions; and contrary to the expectation at least of Sieyès, the form which the new government took at the outset was largely personal. The Consulate and the ministry were entirely so, their members being chosen with a keen business instinct, like that of a great industrial or commercial master, for personal character, integrity, capacity, and devotion.

"What revolutionary!" said Napoleon to his brother Joseph, "would not have confidence in an order of things where Fouché is minister? What gentleman would not expect to find existence possible under the former Bishop of Autun? One keeps my left, the other my right. I open a broad path where all may walk." This was so far true, but such nice discrimination could not be exercised in filling the hundreds of minor offices. France is second to no land in the ambition of its people for office-holding, and among

1 Further references are the Eckart: Montgelas. Fournier: Tratchefski Archives in Vol. LXX, Studien und Skizzen. Reinach: Société d'histoire de Russie. Correspondance Royaliste. Pin-Martens: Traces de la Russie. Gaud: d'Antraigues. Stanhope: Montgelas; Denkwürdigkeiten. Life of Pitt.